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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**MAN SENTENCED FOR STEALING VA BENEFITS**

Susan W. Brooks, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana, announced that JOHN R. RICHARDS, 35, Terre Haute, was convicted and sentenced late yesterday for stealing \$29,342 in funds belonging to the Department of Veterans Affairs, following an investigation by its Office of Inspector General.

Between December 31, 1997 and September 29, 2000, Richards stole and converted to his own use approximately \$29,342 in Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs to his deceased mother, who was the widow of a deceased veteran of the United States Army. He accomplished this by forging her name to 34 VA benefit checks and then cashing them at a Terre Haute grocery store.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Steven D. DeBrotta, who prosecuted the case for the government, U.S. District Judge John Daniel Tinder accepted RICHARDS plea of

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guilty and sentenced him to one year and one day of imprisonment, to be followed by a further three years of supervised release. He also ordered RICHARDS to pay full restitution for the stolen funds to the VA.

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